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Faculty of Arts, Department of Economics



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as their study Assignment of Public Private Partnership and MICE Tourism Modules of
the University of Colombo

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Cover page – Tourism Leaders' Summit 2015

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Preamble

The Tourism Leaders' Summit, which deliberated on a range of current topics with an emphasis on promoting MICE tourism and tourism opportunities was held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) on September 25th, 2015. Organised by the students of first batch the Executive Diploma in Tourism, Event and Hospitality Management (EDTEHM) as their study assignment of Public Private Partnership and MICE Tourism modules of the University of Colombo (UOC), the summit was themed, 'Billions of Tourists, Billions of Opportunities: Think Globally, Act Locally'.

The first Tourism Leaders' Summit was convened with the Sri Lankan 'Ayubowan' and much pomp pageantry amidst the swirling, somersaulting Kandyan dancers to welcome the distinguished guests. The eclectic and experienced panel of speakers was carefully selected to address every aspect of meeting the needs of 'One Billion Tourists with One Billion Opportunities'. Interestingly, it presented both the sides of the tourism story—mass Vs high end tourism.

The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) made history in joining the UOC to sign a Letter of Interest under the leadership of Hon John Amaratunga, the newly appointed Minister of Tourism Development and Christian Affairs. This venture will provide UOC students the opportunity to take the industry to new heights. The Letter of Interest is expected to link the industry with the programmes followed by the students to conduct research in issues related to tourism. Further, two Letters of Interest were also signed between UOC and Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority as well as between the university and the Mount Lavinia Hotel. Through such ventures, the university hopes to form industry partnerships when conducting research on tourism related subjects and thereby, gather information in order to take effective steps to develop the industry. This venture is also endorsed by Sri Lanka Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO), The Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL) and The Association of Small and Medium Enterprises in Tourism (ASMET).

As an organisation that performs a key role in educating tourism practitioners, the UOC is now able to contribute more actively towards a knowledge based economy. As a start, Dr Rohantha Athukorala, Chairman – SLTPB handed over 80 key topics on issues of the industry to Dr D A C Suranga Silva, Course Coordinator of the Tourism, Economics and Hospitality Management Courses – UOC. These will become the dissertation topics for the students. The findings of these topics will then be presented back to the SLTPB where it will be accessible to the industry through the Sri Lanka Tourism library. Further, plans are also underway to work out the presentation of an honorarium for research students.

In addition, the presentation made by Malik Fernando, Director – MJF Group was extremely engaging and impressive. He stressed that Sri Lanka should focus on experience based high end tourism, as there is much potential for the country to develop in that sector. "The world has changed, tourists are not looking at the beaches or the conventional model. They are looking at experiences; meeting Sri Lankans, learning how to cook Sri Lankan food and understanding our cultural traditions. They are far more experiential," he said. Adding that the fact that the country remains to be pristine and unspoilt as it was in a tourism cocoon due to the 30-year conflict, is our biggest advantage, he said that authorities should not merely look at numbers.

“The way we at Dilmah and Resplendent Ceylon are looking at it is, we want to achieve USD 2.5 billion like the government, but we want to do it with 500,000 tourists not 2.5 million. When you go for mass market tourism, there is a massive impact on the environment, we do not grow enough food in this country. But there are other countries such as Maldives and Bhutan, which have gone for high value-added tourism. I urge all of you to develop in your master plans to take advantage of the fact that for 30 years we did not have the ubiquitous, mass-market international brands. We have a few high end brands coming in but the fact that we do not have skyscrapers and 10,000 to 20,000 roomed resorts is an advantage; because if we had that we would actually turn off exactly the kind of tourist we want lure in. The reason they want to come here is because it is pristine, our people are largely unspoiled and they are still warm,” he said. He further added, “what we need is high value tourism. We need, not numbers, but we need high spend per visitor.”

The information shared by Dilip S Samarasinghe, Director (Media and Publicity) – Board of Investment was insightful and gave the audience an idea of the economic potential of Tourism in Sri Lanka. Another notable and educational address was by Rohan Jayaweera, COO – Antyra Solutions who spoke on digital branding. Shashika Kahadawela, Assistant Manager (Sustainable and Green Initiatives) – Jetwing Group spoke on Sustainable and Green Initiatives for Tourism and Hospitality Industry. Mehdi Serrou, General Manager – Shangri-La Hotel & Resorts Sri Lanka too made an engaging presentation on the core values promoted by Shangri-La Hotel & Resorts and how they went hand in hand with that of Sri Lankan traditions. Further, Paddy Withana, Chairman – Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, Dr Rohantha Athokorala, Prof Athula Ranasinghe, Dean (Faculty of Arts) – UOC, Steven Bradie Milles, CEO – Colombo Academy of Hospitality at SLIIT/William Angliss Institute, Paddy Paul, Managing Director – Golden Isle Travels, Indika Vithanage, President – Sri Lanka Institute of National Tourist Guide Lecturers, Aasim Mukthar, CEO – Sri Lanka Exhibition and Conference Services (Pvt) Ltd. also made interesting and engaging presentations on a host of related topics.

Apart from the educational enrichment, the audience was aptly treated to exciting cultural entertainment. The vibrant dances included, dance of the tea pluckers, low country dances, the devil dance and most fascinatingly accompanying of the distinguished guests along with renowned Chef (Dr) Publis Silva to the stage for the group photograph.

The summit was moderated by a panel of academics and industry experts including Dr Sepali Sudasinghe, Senior consultant – Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA), Aasim Mukthar, D L Nihal, Senior Economist (Economic Research Department) – Central Bank, Gayan Pereis, Manager (Sri Lankan Holidays) – SriLankan Airlines, Srilal Mitthapala, Institute of Hospitality (Sri Lankan Chapter), Saman Maldeni, Director (Export Services) – Export Development Board and Kanthi Bassnayaka, Director – Asia Pacific Management Institute.

Promoting Sri Lanka as a preferred destination for Tourism, with a holistic approach, which focused on the aspects of investment, exports, people, culture, cuisine, government and e-commerce was the core objective of the summit. Another highlight was the presentation of the first Professional Excellence and National Contribution for Sri Lanka Tourism Development award to Chef (Dr) Publis Silva, in recognition of his contribution to the industry.

Delivering the keynote speech at the event, Sunil Dissanayake, Director – BMICH shared interesting ideas on how to succeed in the first three months of employment in the first job or

in a new job role. He stated, “transition to new roles are the most challenging times in the professional lives of managers and leaders. Success or failure during the first few months is a strong predictor of overall success or failure in the job.” He added, “the good news on transitions is that you get a chance to start afresh and make needed changes in an organisation. But transitions are also periods of acute vulnerability because you lack established working relationships and a detailed understanding of your new role or the new organisation. You are managing under a microscope subject to a high degree of scrutiny, as people around you try to figure out who you are.” He further said, “if you are successful in building credibility and securing early wins, the momentum will propel you through the rest of your tenure.”

At the culmination of the summit was a cultural show, Wonderful Fusion Experience in Sri Lanka, Road to Culture and Cuisine showcasing the best of the country’s culture, cuisine and craft. The renowned culinary master Chef (Dr) Publis Silva presented a demonstration on traditional cuisine at the show, adding colour to the event.

The event was organised in partnership with the BMICH, SLTPB, SLTDA, Sri Lanka Convention Bureau, Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition and Event Organisers, Peoples Bank, Dave Tractors & Combines (Pvt) Ltd, Lankaloha Hardware Limited, Lanka Wine "Montenary", Rockland Distilleries, LG Smartphones, World Duty Free, Pigeon Island Beach Resort, Regent Spice Garden, Okuara Hotels, Excel World, SND Packaging, Lion Royal Resorts, Mount Lavinia Hotel (MLH), Dilmah Tea and Ruhunu Mathra.

Address by Hon. John Amaratunga, Minister of Tourism Development and Christian Affairs

This year's World Tourism Day's theme as is, 'One Billion Tourists, One Billion Opportunities' – which is quite appropriate. It highlights the global potential of tourism for socio economic development. With more than one billion tourists now travelling the world each year, tourism has become a powerful transformative force that is making a genuine difference in the lives of billions of people.

The billion tourists have made tourism a leading economic sector, accounting to 10 percent of the global GDP and six percent of the world's total exports. In 2012, international tourist arrivals crossed the symbolic threshold of one billion for the first time. And the forecasts estimate that the two billion mark will be reached by the year 2030. These constantly increasing figures make tourism one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy.

Tourism goes beyond merely reaching a destination. It has a global reach – every time a person travels, he/she becomes part of the global movement that has the power to drive a positive change on the planet and its people. As a sector that provides as many as, one in 11 jobs worldwide, tourism is a valuable source of livelihood for millions of people. And it is built around millions of cross cultural encounters happening every day in different corners of the world.

Tourism is also a gateway to greater understanding of the world beyond borders; it is the first step towards building peace between communities and nations. Yet these big numbers represent more than just the economic stand. The numbers reflect tourism's vast potential and increasing capacity to address some of the world's most pressing challenges, including socio economic growth, inclusive and sustainable development and environmental issues.

The potential of tourism for sustainable development is considerable. It is one of the world's leading employment sectors. Tourism provides important livelihood opportunities, helping communities to eliminate poverty and drive inclusive development.

This sector can foster multicultural understanding and raise awareness on the need to preserve the cultural and national heritage. Therefore, the theme for this year's World Tourism Day is reminiscent of the opportunities offered by this industry to promote new socio economic prospects and better livelihoods for communities. Tourism has demonstrated its capacity to increase competitiveness, create job opportunities, stem the role of exporters, generate revenue and reinforce the sense and pride of self-esteem within people.

In order to develop tourism sector in Sri Lanka, it is important to develop synergies between government agencies, academic and industry stakeholders. This provides an opportunity to address the challenges which the industry faces at present.

Sri Lanka is marching towards a new era of prosperity, having overcome 30 years of ethnic crisis and civil war. In this context, the tourism industry plays a pivotal role in driving the economic growth of Sri Lanka. The development of this sector is crucial for the country to earn much-needed foreign exchange, and distribute these earnings as benefits to the masses.

Sri Lanka has an ambitious tourism arrival target of 2.5 billion by 2016. And as at the end of 2015, arrivals to the country was recorded at 1.5 million which is well within the target. In

addition, the island aims to attract US\$ 30 million as foreign direct investment (FDI) with the targeted arrivals. Tourism-related employment is expected to increase from 125,000 in 2010 to be 500,000 by 2016, expanding this industry's services island-wide. The wealth from tourism should be distributed to a larger cross section of the society, while its activities should be integrated into the rural economy. Foreign exchange earnings are also expected to increase from US\$ 500 million in 2010 to US\$ 2.75 billion by 2016.

This sector will contribute towards the improvement of global trade and economic linkages of Sri Lanka. The Ministry of Tourism Development and Christian Affairs will draft a new five-year tourism strategy with the assistance of all industry stakeholders to be implemented in 2020, which will have a holistic approach towards the sector. The ministry will strengthen government agencies such as Sri Lanka Tourism to serve the industry and travellers in an efficient manner.

Address by Prof. Athula Ranasinghe, Dean (Faculty of Arts) of the University of Colombo

Tourism is one of the most prosperous businesses nowadays, not only in Sri Lanka but globally. Irrespective of the country you visit, you will see that it has become one of the key industries in the world. People are on the move, which should be capitalised on. Efforts have been made to develop this industry through various endeavours and events of this nature too constitute for a step forward in that long journey.

In the modern business context, though private sector businesses and free market systems are discussed about, it should be comprehended that the support and guidance of the Government is necessary for private sector-led businesses. Therefore, the involvement of the private sector under the guidance of the state is the healthiest approach for the development of any sector, especially tourism.

What is the role of state universities in organising endeavours of this kind? A university is conventionally identified as a centre of excellence of knowledge. Hence, academic contribution is the key role of universities which cannot be neglected.

Industry stakeholders are experts on doing business. Universities possess the expertise in conducting research and development, therefore it can be stated that the contribution of the universities to the industry will be of immense use where national policy making is concerned. It will also be useful for private sector organisations to make informed decisions. Hence, universities need to contribute by way of conducting research and providing academic knowledge to the sector.

At the same time, in the modern context, the universities have a second role to play as well – that is in terms of extension programmes. University education must go beyond teaching theories, into the field where students can gain experience, working with people. Universities therefore have a responsibility to work together with active economic agents or businesses, not only in the tourism sector but all other industries. The universities must go to the field and help the industry to identify its issues and thereafter suggest solutions.

Moreover, issues in the university system too, can be resolved through collaborations with the private sector. For instance, take the graduates' employability, where tremendous efforts are made to increase it. Employment opportunities for graduates could be identified by working together with potential employers. Therefore, close links must be maintained with all industries. Furthermore, the gap between academia and the industry should be reduced. This is the time to work with authorities and the private sector to seek ways to bridge this gap.

The Science of Destination Management by Dr. Rohantha Athukorala, Chairman of Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau

Take a look at the Sri Lankan apparel industry which has grown in value from around 0.2 billion to 5 billion. In 1974, the Sri Lankan industry was known for tailoring, then we moved to sourcing management in the 1980s leading up to the 90s. The emergence of supply chain management followed, and we progressed as a country to social accounting. Now the industry has shifted to being sustainable and has become the world's first ethically sourcing destination.

The local cinnamon industry has moved from a bark into essential oils, flavouring and we have now launched the pure cinnamon brand globally. Sri Lanka has captured almost 90 percent of the world market share in cinnamon; and we are now looking for a geographical indicator (GI).

Where the tea industry is considered, it was state-owned in the 1970s via authorities such as the Janatha Estate Development Board and SLSPC. Then the auction system was introduced in 1978, where Sri Lanka went on to hold the best tea auctions in the world. Everybody predicted the industry to crash when Sri Lanka was trying to move buyers from London to the Colombo tea auction. But the sector survived and today 99.9 percent of the tea that is produced is going through this auction system.

Now the challenge is to figure out what needs to be done with Sri Lanka Tourism. How can we make this industry the number one foreign exchange earner for Sri Lanka? Currently, we are targeting a three billion revenue which is between 4-5 percent of GDP.

The tourism industry's GDP contribution in developed economies is between 20-22 percent; and this cuts across the entire value chain, which is what this industry can become. As students of the University of Colombo – the most prestigious and recognised university in the country – it is vital that you focus on the issues of this industry. The research you conduct will be made available at the Sri Lanka Tourism library, so that it will be accessible to SLAITO, TACSL, ASMET and other industry-related institutes.

The topics forwarded to the University of Colombo are as follows,

- The importance of maintaining hygiene and sanitation when a country attracts visitors.
- How can we make beach properties in the the hotel sector profitable?
- How can we attract family tourism into Sri Lanka with new product development such as theme parks?
- The need for a tourism masterplan for Sri Lanka.
- What are the different aspects of differentiating destination marketing? How did India develop the 'Incredible India' campaign, and are there lessons for Sri Lanka?
- The issue of human resources in the hospitality industry – how do we address it with unemployment levels as high as 4.6 percent? Should non-hoteliere be considered when recruiting general managers to hotels, to bring new thinking?
- South Korea as the next booming source business for Sri Lanka.
- Will homestay tourism work in Sri Lanka?
- Is cruise tourism the next big opportunity for Sri Lanka?
- Is the minimum rate applicable in Colombo for hotels, the correct strategy?

- Does trade fairs actually build tourism in Sri Lanka? – What is the ROI, what impact do they have.
- How do you manage traffic in wildlife parks?
- New product development in the hospitality industry.
- How can Sri Lanka develop the tourism industry to have a GDP contribution of 24 percent, which is around 15 billion to the country's overall economy?
- How do you regulate beach boys into the Sri Lankan economy and tourism?
- How strong is sports tourism in Sri Lanka; can golf tourism work for Sri Lanka?
- Should Sri Lanka become an international hub for entertainment?
- Should Jaffna be the Bali of Sri Lanka?
- How big is Halal tourism in Sri Lanka?
- What is carrying capacity of Sri Lanka?
- The relationship between infrastructure development and tourism arrivals.
- How important is sustainability for the tourism industry? The tree cover has gone down from 53 percent to 29 percent in the last 20 years. And if it continues, there will not be a tourism industry product to be marketed. How do you maintain sustainability?
- Should Sri Lanka be the country partner for ITB in 2017?
- Can the eighth wonder be marketed more vigorously?

There are 80 topics which have been selected. The Department of Economics of the Colombo University will evaluate, identify proper research problems and thereafter, hand those over to students. Honorariums will be offered to research students as well.

This will see the dawn of a new era in which we will see how the onion ring will pick up on tourism. Maybe in another two years' time, together with the master plan that will be launched, we might have an onion ring peeling out for the tourism industry and that could be the masterplan in terms of this industry becoming a 22 percent contributor to the GDP.

Tea Industry Strategies and Opportunities by Malik J. Fernando, Director of MJF Group - Dilmah Tea

Sri Lanka's attractiveness lies in the fact that we are different. The concept of nation branding seeks to explain how a particular country is perceived overseas, based on its goods and services. How is Sri Lanka positioned? As many of you know, until recent time, our country was not positioned rather positively.

So when you talk of Ceylon Tea and the brands that export it from Sri Lanka, mentioned in their packaging that it is proudly packed in Sri Lanka. There is the lion logo and hopefully it tastes fantastic. For a consumer in the US, UK or any other region, this is a positive perception of Sri Lanka. When they fly on SriLankan Airlines and have a good experience in doing so, it creates a positive perception. Similarly with Ceylon Cinnamon and Sri Lanka Cricket which are brands and services that fly the flag for this country.

Much like many of us who have never been to Germany, assume what it would be like based on Mercedes-Benz or BMW; that is how a country is perceived. And due to the ethnic conflict, largely the country was perceived in a negative manner which is why tourism suffered. But that is now rebounding and the outlook is positive.

However, where tourism is concerned, we have to look at everything that we have done for the last 30 years, throw it out of the window and start from the beginning with a clean sheet approach. When we switch from tea to tourism, it is evident that we are selling tourism similar to how we were selling tea, which was not in an optimum capacity.

The most beautiful part of Sri Lanka is the tea country; it is the most pristine and stunning part of the island. When we show the beauty of the tea country throughout the world, it sells Sri Lanka. No other country has the tea scenery and the climate of our country. When consumers around the world see commercials that showcase the pristine beauty of Sri Lanka's tea country, it will motivate them to visit the country.

Through commercials, they will see how tea is handpicked, the meticulous care and smiles on the faces of the tea pickers. One of the biggest attributes we have in this country is the warmth and friendliness of our people. We are not taking adequate advantage of that. Therefore, when people see it as part of nation branding, tourists from around the world will want to come here.

Ceylon tea is like French wine. It is world's preeminent. Ceylon tea stands out like French wine does. However, we lost the plot due to lack of marketing, where we never marketed Ceylon tea. Therefore, people in countries where the product dominated became reliant on other brands and avoided using Ceylon Tea because it is expensive. We lost the market and now around 80 percent of Ceylon Tea is exported to 4-5 countries such as Libya, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Russia – all of which are in turmoil.

Sri Lankan tea does not have diversification which is an issue. We are selling largely on price, which makes it difficult when there is a high cost of production. Yet there are certain traders in this country who want to – unbelievably – import tea into Sri Lanka due to the fact of Ceylon tea being too expensive; without a consideration for the fact that four million people in this country are dependent on the production of Ceylon Tea.

During the ceasefire period in 2001, about ten years ago, we received inquiries from many consumers who wrote to us saying that they would like to visit the tea estates. Thereafter, informal trips were organised for those customers where they could stay with the estate managers. After such trips, they wrote back to us stating that they had the most wonderful time and that they would like to visit again.

Having realised that this was a potential business opportunity which could be developed. This paved the way for the introduction of a product called Ceylon Tea Trails, which is now one of the most successful small luxury resorts in the country. It is the first Relay & Chateau resort which is a high-end French affiliation. There are only 21 rooms. But de facto by going high end this resort have the revenue and profitability of maybe a 200-300 room hotel, with a limited impact on the landscape.

When Dilmah ventured into tourism, we realised that Sri Lanka was selling its tourism product similar to the way it sells tea – as a commodity. This should change. What is meant by selling as a commodity? In the tea industry, we deal with a middle man and not with the consumer directly. Unfortunately tourism is no different. Much like our strategy in tea is price-based, in tourism as well, there is a similar situation.

The famous branding guru David Keen who visited the country recently made a presentation on tourism, where he played a Sri Lanka Tourism promotional video from the 1970s which looked very much similar to a video from 2015. The point he was trying to make, is that the world has changed. People aren't just looking at beaches or the conventional model anymore. They are looking at experiences – meeting Sri Lankans, learning how to cook Sri Lankan food and understanding its cultural traditions.

Due to the unfortunate war, Sri Lanka was in a tourism cocoon for 30 years. In a way, it was a fortunate thing for tourism because that is the country's attraction – in that it has remained pristine and unspoilt. It is not like Bali, Phuket or some of the coastal hotels in Vietnam.

The perception of Dilmah and its Resplendent Ceylon arm is that we too want to achieve the Government's target of US\$ 2.5 billion as revenue from tourism. But we want to reach this mark with 500,000 tourists rather than half a million.

Mass market tourism poses a massive impact on the environment. Countries such as Maldives and Bhutan promote high value added tourism. Therefore, when developing master plans for tourism the fact that Sri Lanka did not have any ubiquitous mass market brands coming in for 30 years, should be taken into account. In fact it is an advantage that the island doesn't have skyscraper 10,000-2,000 room resorts – whereas if there were, the country would turn off exactly the kind of tourists it would want to woo.

The reason tourists visit this country is because it is pristine, the people are still largely unspoilt and warm. Despite what one might believe markets such as Thailand, Vietnam and Bali in Indonesia are on the downtrend. Sri Lanka cannot compete with those markets because – much like Ceylon tea – our cost of production is high since we are a middle income earning country. Sri Lanka cannot be sold on price, just like our exporters are trying to sell tea on price which is very foolhardy. We don't have the economies of scale; you cannot produce here or employ workers (due to the tightness of the labour market), at a similar cost as in South East Asia.

Hotel rooms that we would consider mid-priced or volume selling at US\$ 150 would sell at US\$ 80 in South East Asia. Hence, Sri Lanka should not try to emulate those countries which have had a 30-year edge in developing mass market tourism which is now starting to level out.

Sri Lanka needs high value tourism – that is not numbers, but high spend per visitor. Currently the value is between US\$ 100-150 which is too low. If this can be increased to 300-350, Sri Lanka can achieve its target without increasing the number of tourists and with the same or lesser impact on the environment.

People admire this country's unspoilt and pristine beauty. However in ten years, at the current rate, it will not be unspoilt. Public relations (PR) is key. But promotions through paid advertising is a cliché. The country needs to get editorial publicity and PR which doesn't cost anything – but for this you need a unique product.

Sri Lanka's shift of focus towards the Western markets is a positive trend. Targeting countries such as China is foolhardy. The Chinese are not interested in Sigiriya because they have much older antiquities. Nor do they like spice. Research has showed that the Chinese tourists don't visit a second time.

High end Chinese tourists go to the Maldives. Up to 40 percent of tourists who come to this country are not staying in hotels because they belong to lower end categories. It is great that the Sri Lanka Tea Board and Sri Lanka Tourism is taking measures to promote the country in the west because that is where we have comparative advantage.

The island is an English-speaking country. We were a former colony, therefore as far as the British are concerned, they feel very much at home here. They are repeat guests which is important. In marketing loyalty is vital. The European travellers come year-in-year-out. Thus, if the country is marketed among them they visit repeatedly.

Sri Lanka – when developing its master plan – should focus on those markets whose aspirations match what we have to offer. We have to build loyalty. Every European who visits this country will go back and convert 10 others.

Sri Lanka is six countries in one – there are different climatic zones, but the circuit has been an issue for high end travellers. Therefore, we should develop inland transportation where we are already seeing growth in terms of improved air links.

We need unique resorts where tourists are happily stay for 10 days instead of spending two days in five different resorts. Tourism should be high end and aspirational.

When the Ceylon Tea Trail product was conceived in a plot of 12 acres of land, it was planned to build 39 rooms (which everyone perceived to be rather unwise), but we went ahead and built it – the smallest room is 1,500 square feet. It is certain that we will get returns on our investment.

Sri Lanka is the most beautiful country in the world. It should be repositioned as a 'Maldives with a culture'.

Evolution of the Tourism Industry in Sri Lanka by Mr. Paddy Withana, Chairman of Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority

It was Mr. J. R. Jayawardene, in his capacity as the Tourism Minister of State, who took the initiative to develop tourism. As it was mentioned, Sri Lanka has six countries in one and 1,000 values and treasures.

A billion tourists and billion opportunities. With so many treasures, there are numerous values that Sri Lanka can offer. High end tourism should be focussed on. For 25 years, the country suffered due to war and there was a setback in terms of developing the tourism industry, where the rest of the region grew. But those countries are facing issues now, which is why the rates in such countries are cheaper than those of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka grew gradually in mass tourism; the country should be thankful to some stakeholders who stood by the industry and invested in tourism. They didn't leave because the country was facing a war, but they hoped and knew that this island had a future. The industry grew amidst 30 years of conflict. The private sector sustained and invested; they went to trade fairs; spent their own money and promoted the country.

The involvement of the private sector was important. The Hon Minister spoke about the 9-10 percent contribution from tourism to the global GDP. One out of 11 people in the world are employed in tourism. By 2030 a billion tourists will be travelling around the world. Sri Lanka expects four million tourists to visit the country by 2020, with 400,000 employment opportunities and 50,000-70,000 additional rooms in this industry.

Currently, tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner in Sri Lanka. The country needs to seek ways to improve this, and achieve the revenue target of US\$ 8t billion by 2020. The industry will grow, as the authorities are keenly looking at tourism as one of the biggest industries that support the growth of the economy.

Efforts are made to explore way in which the hotel schools can be involved in spearheading the training as main training centres, with the private sector involvement. There is an issue with regards to the carrying capacity. For example, there is a problem in Yala – the national park and the animals should be safeguarded while managing the number of tourists that can be accommodated.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe suggested the development of another national park. Land could be allocated for this, as there are resources in the country. In addition, animals in the existing national parks should be safeguarded – for instance regulations should be imposed to protect mammals and whales. If there aren't any proper mechanism to preserve resources, it can ruin the country's tourism product offering. The Sri Lankan tourism industry needs to see the implementation of regulations via the authorities, so that the treasures could be regulated.

This country is blessed with many things. There are beautiful beaches. The high-paying guests need privacy, and that is what you find in Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius. They are getting US\$ 1,000 hotel rooms where there is privacy. The plantation areas and upcountry are obviously two of the most beautiful parts of the world. That is what Sri Lanka has to sell.

When promoting the country among European tourists, we would look at people who want to stay here for 8-10 days. Such tourists will revisit. They are repeat clients, especially from the

UK and countries in the European Union (EU). That is why the Prime Minister is keen on conducting a special programme on marketing and selling on those destinations. The MICE market which is an important area, will be focussed on as well. Our biggest advantage is the potential opportunities for MICE tourism in the Indian market, where there are rapidly growing international companies.

Discussions were conducted on opening a top end international convention centre of around 5,000 seats in Sri Lanka. Currently there is the Bandaranaike Memoria International Conference Hall (BMICH) and the John Keells Group will start their project of developing a convention centre. There should be a plan. We have to open up to the world.

Where the industry is concerned, we need skilled personnel and training. The universities have a part to play in this, as those are the institutions that will produce professionals and academics.

Research should be carried out to figure out sustainable ways to contributing to the community. There is an issue in the country, where 22 percent of children are malnourished, 30 percent are obese – in other words half of the children in Sri Lanka are unhealthy. Then there is an average of about 60 percent out of this, with diabetes. What shall we do? We need to research on how tourism could be a player to help school children.

Awareness programmes on malnutrition should be organised school level. The hotel schools can conduct classes to children to eat healthy food. Zones and areas could be identified via tourism, in figuring out how to help the community. Tourism must have benefits to the community, for the treasures we sell, belong to the people of this country.

Our beaches are polluted. A pilot project – Blue Flag Project – was initiated to address this issue. Discussions were held with the Australian High Commissioner, representatives of the EU and the French government on getting the necessary technology for this venture. We are looking at future tourism. The private sector must be involved and ensure that such projects are supported, which will in turn help in protecting the environment.

There are a lot of challenges in this industry. Number one is skilled labour. We need people to manage the increasing number of properties.

Measures should be taken to improve the restaurants and the quality of food. We are looking at how we can grow our own fruits and vegetables, while strengthening the supply chains. The supply comes from the people, and therefore they must be encouraged to grow.

There should be proper planning. Sigiriya should be one of the icons of the world. It should be promoted. The national parks and wildlife should be promoted. Take the beaches on the East coast from Trincomalee to Wakarai – Passekudah which is one of the best beaches of the world, is already ruined. A major concern in tourism is protecting the country's resources.

There are lot of figures – US\$ 160 as earning per tourist, increasing up to US\$ 200 by 2020. We are looking at a million direct and indirect employment opportunities. The MICE market and the cruise business has to be developed. People are already here looking at a cruise terminal in Colombo. We are looking at building another airport and increasing the capacity of the existing airport, where there should be a carrying capacity of about 15 million in time to come.

There are multiple aspects and the country is ready to invest in it. Investments can be received. Many things are in the pipeline to help tourism. However, the commitment must come from the people, on hot to sustain and maintain the standards. We have to safeguard the 1,000 treasures and values of this country, as it belongs to the people; while avoiding what happed to other neighbouring countries. We have to think of the numbers, the country and people.

The First 90 Days: Getting Up to Speed, Faster and Smarter – Keynote Speech by Mr. Sunil Dissanayake, Director General of Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall

How to succeed, in the first ninety days or the first three months of employment or in a new job role within the same organisation? As you know, the President of the United State gets 100 days to prove himself. But member of the corporate or public sectors get 90 days. The actions you take during your first few months in a new role will largely determine whether you succeed or fail.

Failure in a new assignment can spell the end of a promising career. But making a successful transition is about more than just avoiding failure. When leaders derail, their problems can almost always be traced to vicious cycles that developed in the first few months on the job. And for every leader who fails outright, there are many others who survive but do not realise their full potential. As a result, they lose opportunities to advance their careers and help their organisations thrive.

Why are transitions critical? Transitions into new roles are the most challenging time in the professional lives of managers and leaders. Success or failure during the first few months is a strong predictor of the overall success or failure in the job. Even though a bad transition doesn't necessarily doom you to failure, it makes success a lot less likely. The good news on transitions is that you get a good chance to start afresh and make needed changes in an organisation.

But transitions are also periods of acute vulnerability, because you lack established working relationships and a detailed understanding of your new role or the organisation.

You are managing under a microscope, subject to a high degree of scrutiny, as people around you try to figure out who you are. And most often, they know about you before you join the organisation. They have done their research on you to find out who you are and what you represent as a leader. Opinions of your effectiveness begin to form surprisingly quickly, and once formed, they are very hard to change.

If you are successful in building credibility and securing early wins, the momentum will propel you through the rest of your tenure. But if you dig yourself into a hole early on, you will face an uphill battle from that point forward.

A long career at a single company or even two or three companies is increasingly a thing of the past. Leaders and managers experience many transitions, so the ability to transition quickly and effectively to a new role has become a critical skill. Research has found that typical managers had been promoted four times, moved between business functions from one to another within the same organisation – two times on an average, joined a new company – 3.5 times, moved between business units in the same company – two times and moved geographically – 2.2 times. This totals 13.5 major transitions per manager or one every 1.3 years.

As you will learn later, some of these transitions likely happened in parallel. But the implications are clear. Every successful career is a series of successful assignments, and every successful assignment is launched with a successful transition. Beyond these easily identified milestones, leaders also experience many hidden transitions. These transitions occur when there are substantial changes in leaders' roles and responsibilities without corresponding

changes in your designations. These are common occurrences. Often, the result of organisational shifts due to rapid growth, restructuring, acquisitions and mergers.

Hidden transitions can be particularly perilous because leaders do not always recognise them or give them the attention they deserve. The most dangerous transition can be the one you don't recognise, is happening. This happens without your knowing or unconsciously.

Leaders are also impacted by the transitions of many others around them. Each year about quarter of the managers in a typical company changes jobs. And each leader's or manager's transition materially impacts the performance of a dozen other people – bosses, peers, direct reporters and other stakeholders. So even if you aren't personally transitioned, you are likely or having the transitions of others inflicted on you. To see this, think about the other people who you know, are also in their first 90 days. The number will surprise you.

The problem is that even though a lot has been written and discussed about how to be a more effective manager or a leader in general, little research and writing addresses how to successfully accelerate through leadership and career transitions. People still go through these all important career transitions with little preparation and no reliable knowledge or tools to help them.

Your goal in every transition is to get rapidly as possible to the breakeven point. The breakeven point is the end of the six-month period, which is commonly known as the probation period. This is the point at which you have contributed as much value to your new organisation or a new role, as you have consumed from it. New leaders are net consumers of value, early on. As they learn and begin to take action, they begin to create value. From the breakeven point onwards, they are net contributors, hopefully, of value to their organisation's new roles.

The average time it takes a typical mid-level leader or manager who has been promoted or hired, to reach the breakeven point from the outside, is 6.5 months. Of course, there can be a great deal of variation in the time it takes to reach this point. If you have inherited a disaster, the classic burning platform, you may be creating value from the moment your appointment is announced. If you have been hired from the outside, into a very successful organisation, it may take a year or more for you to be a net value contributor. However, even though the time varies, the goal is the same – to get there as quickly and as effectively as possible.

Like most leaders you have probably learned to make transitions in the school of hard knots – trying things, making mistakes and ultimately winning through. In the process, you have developed approaches that have worked for you, at least until now. But what works well in some situations doesn't work in others. And you may not figure that out until it is too late. That is why it is crucial to follow, a comprehensive framework to make transitions – one that distils the experience of many managers or leaders facing a diverse range of situations.

There are common traps, not in a particular order,

Sticking with that you know – all of us try to stick with what we know, when we move to a new job in the same organisation or in another organisation. You believe you will be successful in the role by doing the same things you did in previous role. Only more so, you fail to see that success in the new role requires you to stop doing some things and to embrace new competencies.

Falling prey to the action imperative – you feel as if you need to take action and you try too hard. Too early to put your own stamp on the organisation. You are too busy to learn and you make bad decisions and catalyse resistance to your initiatives.

Setting unrealistic expectations – you don't negotiate your mandate or establish clear, achievable objectives. You may perform well but still fail to meet the expectations of your boss and other key stakeholders.

Attempting to do too much – you rush off in all directions, launching multiple initiatives in the hope that some will pay off. People become confused and no critical mass of resources get focussed on key initiatives.

Coming in with the answer – the 'know-it-all'. You come in with your mind made up. Or you reach conclusions too quickly about the problems and the solutions. You alienate people who could help you understand what is going on. And you squander opportunities to develop, support for good solutions.

Engaging in the wrong type of learning – you spent too much time focussed on leaning about the technical part of the business, and not enough about the cultural and political dimensions of your new role, which is important. You don't build the cultural insight, relationship and information conduits you need if you are to understand what is really going on.

Neglecting horizontal relationships – you spent too much time focussed on vertical relationships, i.e. within your own departments, up to the boss and down to direct reports, and not enough on peers and other stakeholders. You don't fully understand what it will take to succeed. And you miss early opportunities to build supportive alliances.

Have you fallen into any of these traps in the past? Have you see others do so? To help avoid derailment and get into the breakeven point faster, keep these in mind. Each of these traps victimises in a vicious cycle by making you fail to learn the right things in the right ways at the outset.

For an example, you can make bad initial decisions that damage your credibility. Then because don't trust your judgement, it can become still more difficult to learn what you need to know. You consume energy, compensating for early miscalculations. And the downward spiral takes hold. But your objective is not only to avoid vicious cycles, you need to create virtuous cycles that help you create momentum and establish the upwards spiral of increasing effectiveness.

Good initial decisions founded on the right kind of learning, for example, bolster your personal credibility. As people come to trust your judgement your ability to learn accelerates. And you equip yourself to make sound calls on tougher issues.

Your overriding goal in getting up to speed and taking charge is to generate momentum by creating virtuous cycles; and to avoid getting caught in vicious cycles that damage your credibility.

Leadership ultimately is about influence and leverage. You are, after all, only one person. To be successful you need to mobilise the energy of many others in your organisation. If you do the right thing, then your vision, expertise and drive can propel you forward. If you don't you

can end up, caught in negative feedback loops from which it may be difficult or impossible to escape.

The root causes of transition failure always lie in interaction between the new role with its opportunities and pitfalls, and the individual with his strengths and vulnerabilities. Failure is never only about the flaws of the new leader. Indeed all the failed leaders had achieved significant success in the past. The business situations facing leaders who derail are no tougher than those in which others succeed brilliantly.

Transition failures happen because new managers or leaders either misunderstand the essential demands of the situation or lack the skill and flexibility to adopt them. Flexibility and adoptability are the keywords here. You can dramatically accelerate your transition into your new role, do the right things, the essential transition tasks listed and you will rapidly create momentum that will propel you to even greater success. So prepare yourself. This means making a mental break from your old job and preparing to take charge of the new one.

Perhaps the biggest pitfall you face is assuming that what has made you successful to this point will continue to do so. The dangers of sticking with what you know working extremely hard at doing it and failing miserably are very real. Then accelerate your learning. You need to climb the learning curve as fast as you can in your new organisation. This means understanding its markets, products, technology, systems and structures as well as, its culture and politics. You must be systematic and focussed about deciding what you need to learn and how you will learn it most efficiently.

Match your strategy to the situation, different types of situations require you to make significant adjustments in how you plan for the execution of your transition. A clear diagnosis of the situation is an essential pre-requisite for developing your action plan.

Secure early wins – the low-hanging fruits. Early wins build your credibility and create momentum. They create virtuous cycles that leverage the energy that you put into the organisation to create a sense that good things are happening. In the first few weeks you need to identify opportunities to build personal credibility.

In the first 90 days or three months, you need to identify ways to create value and improve business results that will help you to get into the breakeven point which is at the end of the six months, more rapidly. Then negotiate success, because no other single relationship is more important, you need to figure out how to build a productive working relationship with your new boss/s and manage their expectations.

Then achieve alignment – the higher you rise in an organisation – the more you must play the role of organisational architect. This means figuring out whether the organisation's strategic direction is sound, bringing its structure into alignment with its strategy and developing the processes and skill bases necessary to realise your strategic intent.

Another crucial point is building your team. If you are inheriting a team, you need to evaluate, align and mobilise its members. You are also likely to need to restructure it, to better meet the demands of the situation. Your willingness to make tough early HR calls, and your capacity to select the right people for the right positions are among the most important drivers of success during your transition and beyond.

You need to be both systematic and strategic in approaching the team building challenge. If you don't do that right, everything will collapse around you. Create coalitions. Your success depends on your ability to influence people outside your direct line of control. Supportive alliances, both internal and external, are necessary if you are to achieve your goals. You, therefore, should start right away to identify those who support this essential for your success. And to figure out how to light them up on your side.

Then keep your balance in the personal and professional side of transition. You must work hard to maintain equilibrium, and preserve your ability to make good judgements. The risk of losing perspective becoming isolated and making bad calls are ever present during transitions. There is much you can do to accelerate your personal transition and gain more control over your work environment.

The right advice and counsel network is an indispensable resource – having the right mentors. Finally, you need to help all those in your organisation – direct reports, bosses and peers – to accelerate their own transitions. The fact that you are in transition means, they are too; because they need to transit to you. The quicker you get your new direct reports up to speed, the more you will help your own performance. Beyond that the potential benefits to the organisation of systematically accelerating everyone's transitions are vast.

The first step is to diagnose the type of transitions you are going through – whether you are preparing to interview to a new position or have taken a new role, this is the starting point for applying the fundamental principles. Promotion and on-boarding into new companies are the most frequent shifts. However, most leaders taking new roles experience multiple transitions in parallel. For example, joining a new company and moving to a new location, or being promoted and moving from a functional to a cross-functional role.

This complexity adds to the transition challenge and the risk of derailing. And it means it is critical for you to understand the types of transitions you are experiencing; and to identify which shifts you are finding to be most challenging. Your transition begins the moment you learn that you are being considered for a new job or promotion. No matter what kind of transition you are making, by roughly the three-month mark, key people in the organisation typically expect you to be getting some traction.

No matter how much preparation time you get, start planning what you hope to accomplish by specific milestones. Even a few hours of pre-entry planning can go a long way. Begin by thinking about your first day in the new job. What do you want to do by the end of that day? Then move to the first week, then focus on the end of the first month, the second month and finally the three-month mark.

In fact most agree that moving into a new role is the biggest challenge a manager or leader will face. While transitions offer a chance to start afresh and make needed changes in an organisation, they also place managers and leaders in a position of acute vulnerability. Missteps made during the crucial three months in a new role can jeopardise or even derail your success. To end, whether you are starting a new job, being promoted into a new role, embarking on an overseas assignment, or being trapped as CEO, how you manage your transition will determine whether you succeed or fail.

A quote from Harry Truman, a former US President goes: “Those who do nothing make no mistakes.”

Investment Opportunities and the Tourism Industry by Mr. D. S. Samarasinghe, Director Media and Publicity of the Board of Investments of Sri Lanka

Investment is a significant factor which the country should consider, due to the power it has to effect economic and social change. Hence, the Board of Investment (BOI), as the investment promotion agency of the Government, seeks for ways and means to bring investments into the country, with the objective of bringing about economic development.

The BOI largely plays a promotional role – in that it tries to bring investors into the country, make a strong case for them to invest and help support Sri Lanka's development. Where the size of the island is considered, many opine that it is a small country, but in the actual scenario it is not.

Sri Lanka's land area is around 65,000 square kilometres – about the size of the Republic of Ireland or maybe the Benelux countries. It has a population of 20 million which is not so small either, as it is about one-third the size of the United Kingdom.

This country has an excellent location which straddles many of the sea routes – close to the Indian sub-continent, Middle East, Africa, East Asia, even Australia is a neighbour. With air travel, Sri Lanka is just 10 hours away from Europe. The island's location is very conducive for investment.

There is political stability in the country, and it is growing economically. Sri Lanka is now considered as a middle income-earning country, in terms of GDP. Its per capita is at the bottom of the middle income earning countries. The country boasts of an excellent literacy rate and also it has never defaulted on any debt obligations, being a country which borrows.

With regard to foreign direct investment (FDI) – that is the inflow of money into the country – agreements have been signed. The country suffered significantly during the conflict with low levels of FDI. But gradually, Sri Lanka has exceeded the mark of US\$ 1 billion bar for about four consecutive years. This year expects the same momentum.

According to the figures of 2104, China is our main investor, followed by UK, USA, Singapore, Netherland, Hong Kong, India, Canada and Australia, respectively. These are the countries whose nationals and companies have invested in Sri Lanka which includes joint ventures between Sri Lanka and foreign companies. It is also important to know the main sectors through which investments come in. Manufacturing accounts for about US\$ 333 million, agriculture US\$ 5.7 million, services US\$ 506 million and infrastructure US\$ 682 million.

The common notion that Sri Lanka has an agrarian economy, is a misconception. In reality, the island has an economy of which the larger investment constituents are services, construction and industries. Tourism comes under the service sector.

Why would an investor want to invest in Sri Lanka? The liberal environment in the country is one reason. For example, the island allows total foreign ownership of enterprises – there is no restriction on the repatriation of earning, which means a foreigner can do business in Sri Lanka and send back their profits.

There are guarantees under the constitution, with respect for patents under the agreement with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) agreement. We offer equality under the

law, and also covered under the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) – which is part of the World Bank. MIGA is similar to an insurance cover. Sri Lanka has also entered into investment protection and double taxation agreements with over 25 countries.

Therefore, Sri Lanka has a liberal environment, and the country was a pioneer in liberalisation – well ahead of the rest of the region, including India. And if not for the conflict, the country could have achieved significant economic growth.

Sri Lanka is ranked in the 99th position, out of 220 countries in the Ease of Doing Business Index, which is well ahead of its South Asian neighbours. But the country is behind its South East Asian neighbours. Hence, our objective should be to improve our position in the rankings, so that the country will be more business-friendly and attractive to investors.

The country has invested significantly in terms of its infrastructure – that is in sea and air ports, roads, power generation and telecommunication infrastructure. This is another fact which the BOI emphasises on, when promoting the Sri Lanka to potential investors.

Many investors, especially those who produce goods are necessary for the tourism sector. Look at our access to foreign markets – currently, Sri Lanka has signed two free trade agreements with India and Pakistan. This means that Sri Lankan manufacturers can access these two large markets without having to pay duty, if they products contain 35 percent of value addition. There are 4,222 specified products in the case of India and 4,686 where Pakistan is concerned.

A similar agreement is being negotiated with China as well. Furthermore, Sri Lanka is reapplying for to gain access to Europe via GSP+. These are reasons as to why an investor may want to invest in this country – because they can gain access to these important markets.

Sri Lanka's skilled workforce is another factor that attracts investors. Currently about half the population belong to working group, so even though people say that our population is ageing, we still have a significant workforce – good and capable human resources. They have already earned a reputation in the apparels sector. Of course tourism sector is another industry. The country has a large pool of accountants who can be used in the BPO sector.

Another reason why investors would like to come to Sri Lanka and set up businesses is because, it is by and large, a country which has a high quality of life, increasingly better healthcare, education, excellent hotels and office complexes. Another important aspect is finance and banking – a key element to business is the establishment of banks.

Our strategies on investments have shifted from general promotions, to focussing on specific areas. For instance, there are 44 specified projects for which the lands have been clearly outlined. Since these are government lands, tax revenue can be collected for those. And the BOI has defined the type of projects it would prefer to be established. We also target world-renowned companies individually and senior officers of such companies.

A one-stop-shop centre has been established at BOI, with plans currently underway to list BOI companies on the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE). These are the new approaches in the area of investment.

Where tourism is concerned, Sri Lanka has a target of over 2.5 million tourist arrivals by 2016. To achieve this, there is a need for 36,000 rooms. And the current capacity as of June 2014, is 26,000. Hence the plan is to fulfil this requirement via FDI.

In 2014, over 1.5 million tourists visited the country which was a landmark achievement. But it is behind many of our East Asian neighbours who attract – in the case of Malaysia it is around 20 million tourists a year.

The BOI has defined the areas in the tourism industry which it hopes to develop, such as hotels. But tourists have to be able to do things in the country – activities. In this sphere, activities such as water, theme and amusement parks; hot air ballooning and eco and agro tourism, to acknowledge tourists about what the country has to offer. The development of domestic air travel is vital because Sri Lanka is dotted with small air ports, and there are lakes or tanks where sea planes can land.

High end tourism is also focussed on. And as part of this there will be developments of golf courses and entertainment studios. Currently global, as well as local hotel chains have begun constructions of large scale project such as Shangri-La and Hyatt Regency.

The rest of the necessary infrastructure such as hospitals, housing, expressways, sea and air ports and water supply, are being developed as well, while addressing the issue of waste management.

The BOI – the state which promotes and facilitates investments – was established by a Parliamentary Act. It has the authority to grant exemptions on the following taxes – corporate, customs and exchange control. The BOI operates 12 industrial zones and if an investor wants to start a project, it acts as liaison between the investor and the different government departments, to get the necessary approvals. The organisation offers a one-stop-shop for investments. Potential investors can apply online from the BOI website.

Educating Future Leaders, Supporting Labour Force Requirements and Challenging Services and Expectations in the Hospitality Sector by Steven Bradie-Miles, CEO of the Colombo Academy of Hospitality Management at the Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology

Is the world ready for Sri Lanka? Is Sri Lanka ready for the world? Yes! Sri Lanka is ready; and the world is ready.

Let's look at how countries around the world market tourism. 'Incredible India' has been a slogan for a long period of time. It has been a successful campaign. India is very much about religious and cultural sites and the landscape. 'Malaysia: Truly Asia' is a song and an advertisement about excitement, night life and buzz. It was mentioned that around 18 million tourists visit Kuala Lumpur. 'Restaurant Australia' is all about landscape and food.

Where Sri Lanka is considered, the slogans and advertisements the country has had in the past, the island offers everything that Incredible India, Malaysia: Truly Asia and Restaurant Australia promote – all rolled into one. This is why Sri Lankans should be proud of their country.

Australia's population is around 22 million and about seven million tourists visit there. Sri Lanka has a population close to 21 million and its tourist arrivals are at 1.5 million, creeping up to the two million mark. There is a lot of potential but we have to believe in the product and sell it to the rest of the world.

Sri Lankans are one of the most hospitable nations of the world. The people are helpful and friendly. The fact that this is an English-speaking country, in comparison to other Asian nations, is an advantage. That is a massive selling point for Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has the finest spices, best tea, great food and fantastic chefs. It has good products and supermarkets. There is a dairy industry which is developing year-on year. There are beautiful beaches. The wildlife – that is the elephants, lizard and snakes – is again a big selling point. There are different climatic zones throughout the country. Upcountry is beautiful and cold, whereas Matara in down south is hot, depending on the time of the year one visits. This is another facet of what makes this country so wonderful.

The air quality in Sri Lanka is fantastic. But that will not be preserved if there aren't any proper waste disposal systems. Another great factor about this country is that it has got a lot of religious and cultural sites which are relatively unadvertised, and therefore unexplored. This is an advantage and will appeal to those tourists who travel around the world not for recreation, but to learn and explore.

The skilled and the semi-skilled labour force is another positive factor. Sri Lanka is open for business. The country has a terrific location. Look at everything around it – one billion people each in India and China, and there is only a tourism market of 1.5 billion at the moment. This indicates that something is wrong. This is where the authorities need to start thinking differently and creatively when planning advertising campaigns.

If we look at it from our position in the middle, a direct flight to Colombo from Melbourne would be 10 hours. But there aren't any direct flights. Everyone who comes to Sri Lanka from Australia has to go via Singapore, Bangkok or Kuala Lumpur. The tourists have to stopover in

either of these countries for 2-3 days. Why don't Sri Lanka do the opposite? That is, have a direct flight from Melbourne to Colombo, with a stopover in Sri Lanka for a week, and head towards the UK and vis a vis.

The Lonely Planet rated Sri Lanka as the number one tourist destination in 2013. This year, Colombo is among the top 10 of cities to visit from around the world. Majority of the Sri Lankans aren't even aware of this. These are powerful tools to promote the country. There are a lot of people who have been to the same place, again and again – the Bali, Fiji, China and Hong Kong. But people now are looking for something different. Sri Lanka has to grab their attention and get them here.

We then come to the career path where we concentrate on educating and the labour force requirements in Sri Lanka. There is a lot of people who still don't view the service industry as a prospective career path. But the figures which were presented in previous presentations show the capacity of the service industry, and the sheer scale of the hospitality and tourism sectors around the world. It is massive in terms of the percentage.

Educating a person and getting him to a particular standard that is expected from an organisation, can be challenging – that is in terms of vocational training and education. There are a lot of people in the hospitality sector who haven't got an academic background, but their training, to a greater extent, has been hands-on. Many chefs around the world do not have any degree. They have achieved success through skills. There is a blend for different people depending on what the businesses demand and what the person actually wants to do.

It is vital that you learn what you love, and love what you do. If you get up every morning, dreading to go to work, then you have chosen the wrong career path. If your parents pressure you to study finance, but you hate it, you are going to have a miserable life.

There are many successful people in the service industry. From the perspective of the Colombo Academy of Hospitality Management (CAHM), we have looked at the situation where we have integrated an Australian curriculum into a Sri Lankan context, as well as we are partners of the Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT).

CAHM is not a hotel school; it is a hospitality school. It focusses beyond just a hotel. We can't train 400 people and get all of them employment as general managers of hotels – that is impractical and impossible. But they can be general managers of related sectors in the hospitality and tourism industry. With regards to vocational education and training, CAHM is linked with the William Angliss Institute in Australia, where we have the focus of an Australian curriculum linking in with what the domestic industry actually needs.

The Australian curriculum concentrates mainly on knowledge, skills and attitude. There are a number of subjects that are taught at CAHM without a learning guide. There is a reason for that. A lot of people want a book and study the theory 100 percent, and struggle when it comes to the practical application of what they learned. Students of CAHM gain practical knowledge, they make mistakes and learn.

No matter what you study, you have to have the right attitude; to know exactly where you want to go and how you proceed. Tourism and hospitality needs vibrant and enthusiastic people. If has knowledge but doesn't have skills or personality, he is not going to be very warm and

welcoming, serving at a hotel check in counter. That vibrancy, practicality and loving of people – that is what this industry is.

It is vital to have the proper facilities when educating people. CAHM is proud of its facilities. Every hotelier is proud of their properties. But what is most important is our staff – for it is all about the people. A hotel can have the best chandelier, but if the person at the front office is lethargic, guests are not going to remember the chandelier. It is the people who make the organisation.

We focus on educating people on a skill-based level, because people have different choices when it comes to career paths. At CAHM we help students identify their strengths with the knowledge we offer. There are students who graduate and go abroad for employment. Some go to Australia for further studies. Similarly, there has actually been numerous students who have stayed in the country – which is a credit to them for not escaping – and are working in hotels and doing wonderfully well.

The career opportunities are unlimited and the broader picture of tourism should be looked at. We have got to think and act big. It is not just hotels, but eco resorts, airlines and cruise ships, tour guides and the healthcare sector. How can hospitality be linked with the healthcare sector? These two are interlinked via customer service or even medical tourism, which is another sector that has potential because Sri Lanka has got outstanding doctors and nurses and hospitals. Then there is indirect hospitality. And it might be a brewery, any form of liquor industry component or an entertainment gaming component, all of which fall under the umbrella of what people love to do.

The industry focusses on the labour force and getting right staff members, which is a big challenge. It is essential to identify the people out there, who can be potentially employed in your business and are appropriate for your brand. This involves the risk of creating a problem with your brand if the right people are not recruited. We are going to have to start thinking realistically about people being poached to join other parts of the industry. And determining the wages should be paid. There is going to be a lot of challenges in Sri Lanka.

The retention of staff is considered a priority, right around the world. One way to retain staff is through the implementation of a professional development programme while they are employed at your organisation, and improving their skills on the day-to-day involvement of their job. You give as an employer, they will give as an employee.

But if a person has got no passion for what he does, then the industry does not need him. Therefore, you have to be passionate about what you do. Then attention should be paid to identify customer experiences and expectations.

The nation-wide challenge for Sri Lanka is that it has beauty in its own backyard, but in this country is looking over the fence. It is good to be curious and look over the fence but we have to look at our own backyard as well. The positive aspect of it is that, it enforces a carefree approach.

How many times do we get to hear about SriLankan Airlines UL being late? It is Sri Lanka's national carrier which is linked with **oneworld**. It has got fantastic aircraft and great food. If it is usually late, why don't we change that? We must make it the universally loved UL. The islanders have to be proud of their national carrier.

Don't be influenced by others when choosing a career path for you. Though your family or relatives might perceive the service industry negatively, there are some bright leaders in it who have successfully progressed in their careers. So dream big!

We need to look at the different forms of state funding for hospitality and tourism, in order to get all levels of young Sri Lankans to be involved and have participation in the industry. They should be given vocational training, where they can branch out and choose a career path in this industry. Youth should be given opportunities.

And finally, Sri Lankans should look at their country with confidence and pride, and remain proud of the industry.

The Importance of Digital Brand Management Strategies and the Opportunities within the MICE Tourism Industry by Rohan Jayaweera, Chief Operating Officer of Antyra Solutions

Currently, Sri Lanka has an advertising inventory of about US\$ 4.7 million per week. It is an ocean out there, and the limitation is that you are not going to crack this code by throwing money at it. And no company or government is going to singlehandedly own this space. The digital space is growing – Google, Youtube and Facebook is growing. Mobile penetration is improving.

The world before internet was such that, when watching a TV programme, for instance say the 1996 Cricket World Cup, we see advertisements trying to convince consumers to buy their products. And people get excited after seeing such messages and bought that particular product – chances are they either like it or not. In the end they are left with a conclusion. That is what the world used to be in 1996.

Within a span of 18 years, the world shifted. Nowadays, if a certain fact has to be validated, people search on Google. Hence, in the past two decades, from a behavioural standpoint of people, there had been a significant shift where engagement and time are now spent online. Most of the marketers haven't captured this yet.

The world existed for 38-45 years with the way the TV, newspapers and radio worked, and that line is still being continued, forgetting that though people sit in front of the TV watching a cricket match, their attention is probably on the Facebook wall, where they look at what their friends are talking about. That is the introduction of the 'zero moment of truth' which a lot of marketers have failed to understand.

Over 50 percent of Sri Lankan tourism industry revenue is generated via digital or online avenues. The FDIs and other sectors probably contribute another 30-40 percent which is on the decline. Online bookings are increasing. People who used to plan tours, book hotels and their holidays four/five months ago, had moved much closer. They are making decisions much closer to the deadline because the information freely available. You are never short of information or recommendations.

Places such as Tripadvisor are what define whether you actually offer value to your hotel or destination when a tourist walks in. Statistics have shown that 83 percent of leisure travellers and 76 percent of business travellers make their decisions, following online research online. Social media have gained significance over the past 10 years.

In the decision making cycle, there are multiple touchpoints. Someone in UK would probably think he wants to take a holiday. And at that moment his choices would be Sri Lanka, Maldives, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia or Philippines. If he opts for a beach holiday, again there are the choices of Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Maldives or Bali which will compete to attract him.

Then for some reason he would have seen the Passekudah beach, which determines his location, and there will be 5-6 properties which will compete to get that customer's decision to be to stay with them. This is the funnel we are seeing and it works in an interesting way even on social media.

What is the power of video? About 120 hours of video get uploaded to Youtube every minute – mostly of children and cats. But it is interesting how people look at the rest of it. For example a guy called Matt Hardy used to travel to cities and upload videos of him dancing in those cities, but interestingly the pattern showed that when people planned holidays, they would log on to Youtube and check whether Hardy danced in the city which they are planning to travel.

Visa is the first company to discover this, and they sponsored Hardy and got him to go to more locations. Visa created a promotion and told their customers to pay with Visa when planning their holiday, go to their particular city and upload a video of them dancing in it. Winners of the competition would get a sponsored holiday from Visa. That is a smart way of building a brand.

When engaging the new traveller, the challenge when using technology, to tell a story in a better way. Sri Lanka still has not figured out what its story is or what our story needs to be – are we a beach? A culture? History? Or are we all of it?

Let's see what strategies different countries have used to engage travellers via online or digital media.

Singapore: The case of Singapore is that, when you are in Singapore for more than 3-4 weeks, it gets boring – you have seen all the places and visited all the malls. The Singapore Government realised this and identified that word is spreading about Singapore being a boring place.

Therefore, to create engagement, they made a set of videos. They got 2.5 million impressions for this particular campaign. There were 30,000 follow up views – that is people coming back and watching it again. And about 200,000 watched all videos in this series. Now, it is not advertising in press or TV saying that 'we have a great beach, come here'. It is about building a brand with a different value in mind for the destination.

Incredible India: Crowd sourcing for this campaign. The Indian authorities created a platform for travellers to upload photos. Tourists who visited during a particular time period were asked to upload pictures and they made a massive collection of photos. People kept coming back to this portal to see how India looked like.

What they did is not expensive, it was an innovative way to build a brand. The credibility is high because the pictures were not taken by the Indian government, but they were what people took and then uploaded to an independent portal. This campaign had 6.5 million followers.

Delta Airlines: when they advertise, they don't promote flight, but they are adding value to passengers by creating an experience – that is a person having a glass of wine on a flight and talking about how could you have that while flying with Delta Airlines. It is not about saying they have the cheapest price or they are the most luxurious, but adding value to build a brand that gets the association.

Marriot Hotels: their slogan was not 'come and stay with us' but it was 'look at the view from our hotel room'. And people shared and spoke about that.

Another award winning campaign was conducted in Queensland in Australia. The entire campaign just said, 'would you like to apply for the best job in the world?' A 12-month contract

was offered to a person who went through an interview process and got a job to be a resort keeper in a city in Queensland. Their budget allocation was around US\$ 4 million to promote this, but the concept itself was so innovative that they collectively gained publicity worth about US\$ 400-500 million. All major TV channels covered it as a news item.

Imagine what they could have done with US\$ 4 million on typical advertising promotion; and imagine what they achieved by creating this fantastic concept of the greatest job in the world in Queensland.

There are key points about digital brand building, especially in the tourism sector.

When you create a promotion, it has to be believable. It is not merely about what we perceive or what we think it is, we need to make it believable and offer value.

It is not about how much you spend, but about awareness, brand engagement and uplift. You have to have creative and innovative ideas.

Focus on content, not about traffic. Often in digital, we measure our success by the number of people visit the sites. You have to create great content and stories about your destination or location to get people engaged.

Create an inherent reason for people to share. Give them something to tell others. Building that is extremely important.

Don't underestimate the power of content creators. The bloggers, people who want little niches are extremely important. They are the ones who endorse and advocate your brand and they will be the thought leaders in the digital medium. The other key point is to give your promotion shelf life.

It is important to look at insights. There is a huge amount of data available for you to make decisions about your company, hotel or destination.

When implementing a particular campaign, it is important to utilise platforms that are meaningful for different countries. Google works for Sri Lanka, but it might not work for China or Russia. You need to be aware of what is working, where, and build your digital capabilities based on that.

Digital marketing is a broader area has a lot of technicalities starting from web development, social media and etc. But it is a very competitive area and hospitality and hotels, it is an industry that is the most sophisticated and the most competitive in all of digital marketing.

If you want to play this game, you need to have commitment, long-term thinking and vision. If you want to achieve greatness, stop asking for permission.

Conclusion

“Think locally, act globally.”

Tourism Leaders’ Summit organised by the students of the Executive Diploma in Tourism, Event and Hospitality Management as their study Assignment of Public Private Partnership and MICE Tourism Modules of the University of Colombo, provided an ideal platform for the stakeholders of the industry to gather and discuss about its stressing issues and the way forward in making Sri Lanka a tourism hub.

It offered the value propositions of networking opportunities and the integration of direct and indirect tourism stakeholder partnerships, as a prime and prerequisite requirement for the promotion of MICE and sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka. Such networking and integration could be used as an effective management tool for successful, responsible and synergised tourism development in Sri Lanka.

The key objectives achieved through the summit are as follows,

1. Identify new opportunities to create innovative and diversified MICE and other specific tourism businesses.
2. Enhance innovative and analytical thinking for developing unique and novel tourism products and packages in order to tap new and emerging tourism markets.
3. To provide a useful and instrumental publication as a reference document and a source of information for tourism and hospitality practitioners.

Issues pertaining to the industry, such as inadequacy of skilled and semi-skilled labour, lack of training facilities and development programmes and the absence of a solid country branding strategy was discussed and analysed comprehensively, while ideas were put forward to address these issues. The summit provided an opportunity for all sectors of the industry to voice their ideas (or concerns) and the importance of making united and collective efforts to achieve the country’s target of reaching 2.5 million tourists by 2016 was emphasised.